

America I've Never Felt Your Affection

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It was a Thursday afternoon in 1958 when it all began. At that point Sal S. Burroughs was 32 years old. It had been 10 years of disillusionment and general madness since those blessed four years at the University of Amherst. Since then Sal had been working on and off as a freelance writer. At this job Sal made miniscule amounts of money. That didn't matter to Sal as long as he had enough money for his food and marijuana. Sal would sit in his house for weeks on end, smoke marijuana and write his poems. He would go out to parties on Fridays and get drunk but never get laid. During those ten years Sal was a sad lonely fellow.

By 1958, Sal had accumulated several hundred notebooks full of hand written poems and 172 mason jars of marijuana stems, seeds, and joint roaches. As the years went by Sal had become more and more discontented with the direction of American society. By 1958 Sal didn't have a single friend in the town just outside Boston where he lived. He would say "They're all just part of the conformist postwar American military industrial complex. F*** em all!" referring to the people of his town.

So by the second Thursday in July, 1958 Sal had become totally fed up the whole scene where he had spent the last ten years of his life.

On that very important Thursday afternoon Sal was sitting on a park bench high atop Mission Hill writing a poem in his breast pocket notebook. This was when *the journey* affectively began.

As he was staring vacantly off into space thinking, Sal muttered the following "This is not the place I am to spend another moment of precious human existence."

With that he stood up and started walking. Sal walked all the way to the outskirts of the city. From there he hitchhiked his way down to Hull, Massachusetts.

After about five rides, Sal had reached the beach in Hull. By then it was about 12:30 P.M. Sal walked up the beach until he found his friend Japhy Reitman's little shack with the red door and the weathered gray-brown shingles. Sal walked up to the red door and knocked. There was no answer.

Sal then saw a figure emerge from the water of the Atlantic.

Sal called to him "Japhy, you old bastard, it's me Sal."

The figure approached stark naked. It was Japhy back from his midnight swim.

The two sat down cross-legged looking out at the inky darkness of sea, sand and sky. For hours the two talked sitting cross-legged in the sand.

After mad discussions of their ideas, they had both constructed after years of hermitage Japhy in his little sea side shack and Sal in his small apartment just outside the city, they both decided they would go on a journey to find the beauty in America. The beauty that they both thought was dead.

"Where to go first?" asked Japhy.

"West across all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable bulge over to the west coast. Think of the immensity of it Japhy, all the people dreaming in the in the blackness of night. O Japhy think of all of it. I'm feeling cosmic vibrations just trying to grasp the immensity of America. O tonight the stars will be out shedding their sparkling din over the prairie. We will cross that prairie and the Rockies and the arid dessert of Arizona and New Mexico. We have all of America to explore and nothing else to do in life. I swear there is immense beauty out there. "

“So it's decided. We will embark on our journey tomorrow,” said Japhy.

There was then a long silence.

After about a minute of silence Japhy spoke up and said, “So our trip is to be a classic affirmation of everything right and true in the character of this nation.”

Japhy said this with a voice of eagerness and complete understanding of what Sal had just said.

“Yes. Yes. I knew you would understand Japhy. You have it right on. Our journey will be a salute to all the possibilities of life in this country,” said Sal.

“We may be the last true Americans left Sal,” said Japhy while picking up sand and letting it sift through his fingers.

“No we will find some on the way whether it be the true-hearted negroes of the south, or the beautiful farm girls of the mid-west or the poets out in Berkley. We will find the beauty in America I just know it,” Sal said staring out at the waters off Massachusetts.

The two went to sleep right then and there on the sand (Japhy still stark naked). They embarked on the journey the very next day, heading due west.